

Visit Estes Park 2016 Operating Plan Summary

Tax Revenues

The 2014 lodging tax revenue total of \$ 1,596,346.62 was 17% higher than 2013 due to rapid recovery of revenues lost during the floods, primarily due to aggressive marketing campaigns funded by regional and federal grants with contributions by the Town of Estes Park, Larimer County and regional partners. Compared to 2012, 2014 lodging tax receipts were 5% higher.

Through September 30, 2015, lodging tax receipts are \$1,629,120.36, which is 17.71% higher year-to-date than the same nine-month period in 2014. One-month receipts in September 2015 were 15.56% higher than they were last year during the one-month period of September 2014. The strong tax receipts so far this year are a result of many factors, including highly successful marketing campaigns, Rocky Mountain National Park's Centennial, notable awards from prestigious magazines and websites, and a vibrant tourism industry world-wide.

Travel Industry Trends

The State of the American Traveler, almost a decade old, has never reported a more positive travel environment, and reports that Americans are feeling bullish about their travel prospects in 2015 – 2016. Travelers are expressing a growing desire for one-of-a-kind, authentic experiences, (shared through social networks, online and mobile devices) to inspire and share travel, and increased disinterest in being served “brand” messages. Like the experiences they are seeking, consumers are longing for (brand) content that is unique, authentic, customized to them, and surprising.

2016 VEP Strategy: These trends have large implications for the “4 Ps” of marketing tourism: product, placement, price and promotion as it relates to Estes Park. Visit Estes Park, the destination marketing organization (DMO) is working to develop and deliver more ‘organic’ content; to define, package and deliver more unique, authentic experiences; to optimize the website and other channels; and to engage travelers while they are in Estes and upon departure to encourage them to share their experiences with others and inspire them to visit.

Top 5 Visit Estes Park Initiatives for 2016 (in no particular order):

1. Destination Management:

Hotels, attractions, restaurants, services and amenities combine to make up a “destination,” a location, that offers a variety of vacation elements and opportunities. These features can increase and create travel demand for the destination as a whole, if the destination markets a unique experience separating itself from other destinations. We continue to see our competitive destinations debuting large attractions, tourism-centered initiatives, renovated & expanded properties, and upgrades to overall guest experiences. Destination product development (DPD) is realizing new opportunities and employing tools to encourage development of substantive travel products that strengthen and create consumer demand.

2016 VEP Strategy: By actively engaging in DPD, Visit Estes Park will work with local and government partners to attract, develop and deliver new guest experiences to affect year-round economic stability and grow winter-spring visitation. As DMO's take on additional responsibility toward a sustainable business environment, their roles have evolved to destination developers primarily by acting as a catalyst and facilitator to create tourism opportunities and developments. VEP has had success in the destination management arena most recently by working with the Recreation District. VEP will continue to work with the Rec. District, and other partners including the National Forest Service.

2. International Tourism

Economies around the world are rapidly changing, and travel demand is growing across the globe. With increased international tourism investments at the state and national levels, the opportunities for Estes Park to advance this sector are quickly multiplying.

2016 VEP Strategy: Many countries and cultures have travel calendars that complement that of our domestic guests, presenting Estes Park with ideal markets to help fill in spring and winter travel seasons. As international demand for mid-country US travel grows, international flights to DIA increase, and new markets become aware of and interested in Colorado, we will work to take advantage of these opportunities. Visit Estes Park will continue to develop international marketing by creating foreign-language marketing materials (including website content and SEO) & travel information, attending trade shows to develop critical sales relationships, and work with area partners to develop new international products & tours.

3. Wellness & Recreation Tourism

For over a century Estes Park has been touted for its healing effects. From spiritual inspiration to nature therapy, high-altitude athletics to holistic practices, we have been offering wellness tourism experiences since the early years. With local wellness products opening and expanding, the wellness tourism industry expanding (currently a \$439B industry), and the state-level branding initiatives, Visit Estes Park sees a lot of potential value in investing in this sector.

2016 VEP Strategy: We continue to engage in this area of DPD by working with area lodging, restaurants, retail and activity-based businesses, helping them develop specific tactics and products that will assist Estes in representing the wellness tourism in a more authentic and effective way. Visit Estes Park also continues to connect with EPMC and their wellness division to support and amplify their efforts.

4. NPS Centennial Celebration

The buzz surrounding the National Park Service's centennial anniversary began in earnest mid-way through 2015. With national brands, government offices, and non-profit organizations joining in to tout the benefits and attributes of our nation's national parks, Estes and Rocky are well-poised to benefit from that buzz.

2016 VEP Strategy: Visit Estes Park is actively working to position Estes and Rocky as the ideal national park experience by partnering with other Colorado national park destinations, the state, regional & local partners, and Colorado schools to tell unique stories of how and why to visit this year. This will be done directly through consumers, through online channels and influencers and through direct marketing campaigns. With consumers looking for more off-the-beaten-path experiences, we have the opportunity to showcase the lesser-known seasons of Rocky and impact winter-spring travel.

5. Winter-Spring Tourism

While the other initiatives above all present Estes Park opportunities to grow year-round tourism, a targeted, meaningful campaign is needed to affect growth in winter-spring visitation. The continued growth in Front-Range populations, declining interest in resort skiing and increasing prices for winter resort vacations, Colorado is fertile ground for attracting new winter guests to Estes Park. Growing interest in and local services for non-resort winter sports adds potential to this sector, and, when coupled with the national park centennial, forms a solid campaign platform. With ski resorts adding non-ski activities to attract a broader market, Estes Park also needs to add both indoor and outdoor winter activities, attractions and services to be competitive during this season.

2016 VEP Strategy: VEP is partnering with Eldora Mountain Resort, area lodges and local shuttle services to create a new well-packaged experience for the Estes area. We are also launching a winter campaign to introduce and *re-introduce* Front Range residents to a variety of outdoor recreation we

currently offer, digital detox (R&R) experiences, holiday happenings and winter events available in Estes Park. This campaign will include both traditional and non-tradition marketing, potentially including advertising, street teams, guerrilla marketing tactics, billboards and public relations efforts. The goals is to differentiate Estes Park from the expensive, crowded and stressful ski resort experiences offered elsewhere in the state.

Other areas of focus for Visit Estes Park in 2016:

Outdoor Recreation:

According to the Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade, outdoor recreation and tourism are woven through the fabric of Colorado's culture and define the state. Estes Park has been incrementally growing outdoor recreation services, goods and products for many years.

2016 VEP Strategy: Visit Estes Park is actively working to progress those efforts. From working with the Rec. District by adding paddle boards to the Lake Estes Marina offerings, to taking a leadership role in forming the new Estes Park Sports & Fitness Cooperative. Visit Estes Park is committed to partnering with area businesses and organizations to develop and promote outdoor recreation in the Estes area.

Rocky Mountain National Park

It is important to note our partnership with the national park and the responsibility we have in marketing the “two parks in one” experience that is virtually seamless for our guests.

2016 VEP Strategy: The Visit Estes Park staff and board will continue to maintain close relationships with park staff to ensure alignment between our marketing efforts and the park's needs and objectives. With that in mind, we include park efforts such as “hike early/hike late,” weekdays in the fall, emphasizing winter and spring travel, etc. With the park's limited marketing resources and few big-budget concessionaires to do marketing, our programs constitute a large portion of the marketing surrounding Rocky Mountain National Park, as well as special programs and events.

Town of Estes Park

Visit Estes Park looks forward to continued collaboration with the Town of Estes Park leadership and staff.

2016 VEP Strategy: VEP will maintain regular meetings and cooperative work with the Visitor Center, Visitor Services, and Events departments. VEP will support the Estes Park Events Complex by helping to cultivate new activities and assist in identifying events that are a natural fit for the Estes Park brand. In addition to ongoing partnerships, VEP hopes to work with the town on future projects, such as wayfinding signage, downtown strategy, Urban Renewal Authority, flood mitigation, economic development and destination product development, among others.

State Tourism

We continue to work with the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) and the Office of Economic Development & International Trade as they work, in tandem, on initiatives combining tourism and economic development, such as wellness and outdoor recreation.

2016 VEP Strategy: Visit Estes Park staff will continue to sit on the marketing and international tourism committees at the CTO, while working closely with their advertising, communications and public relations partners to further engage Estes Park with state marketing efforts.

We recently initiated a partnership with statewide destination partners to promote Colorado's national parks (Rocky, Great Sand Dunes, Mesa Verde and Black Canyon of the Gunnison). We look forward to working with our fellow national park destinations to promote a Colorado national park vacation during this National Park Service Centennial year.

Regional Tourism

In 2015 Visit Estes Park was part of three Northern Colorado marketing initiatives. One with other area scenic byway from Grand Lake to Fort Collins and Greeley that produced a dynamic print brochure encouraging drivers to take in the destinations along the route. The other was collaboration with our Front Range Regional partners to refresh the ColoradoFrontRange.com website as a mobile-friendly regional brewery guide, to produce “Wish you were beer” coaster postcards and distribute brochures to direct travelers to the website. Finally, we conducted a RMNP centennial travel campaign with Grand Lake through a CTO grant project with digital advertising and multi-destination itineraries. VEP also partnered with Grand Lake on a variety of initiatives including the Across the Divide GeoCaching Tour celebrating “both sides of the park.”

2016 VEP Strategy: Visit Estes Park will continue to collaborate with regional partners to promote craft beverages and outdoor recreation in the Front Range destinations. We will also continue our cross-promotion with Grand Lake, both through the state-wide national park marketing and the Across the Divide Geocaching Tour.

Paid Media: Advertising, Media & In-market Engagement

In 2015 we evolved our advertising creative to a more sophisticated, history-centered approach in the *Century of Adventure* campaign. This campaign, featuring emotional quotes from prominent, historical figures and awe-inspiring photography, will continue to expand in 2016 with additional photography and quotes.

2016 VEP Strategy: Both the creative and the delivery will focus on growing awareness of Estes Park as the ideal base camp for Rocky Mountain National Park and as a favorite Colorado destination. The delivery of the campaign will include a mix of media in digital, broadcast and print advertising across a variety of local, regional and national outlets, all with the goal of being effective and efficient by providing the biggest impact possible with the least amount of waste. Additionally, Visit Estes Park will work to identify opportunities for engaging travelers while in the destination through in-market engagement, such as visitor guide distribution, brochures, geo-targeted advertising, and touch screens – all with the goal of engaging guests with the brand and encouraging them to share their experiences in a meaningful and tangible way.

Earned Media: Public Relations & International

In addition to obtaining press coverage, earned media efforts include growing international awareness of Estes Park. This is done through press relations, sales efforts of hosting tour operators and attending tradeshows, developing foreign-language content on our website and in print, and conducting a survey to better understand our international guests.

2016 VEP Strategy: Throughout the coming year, Visit Estes Park will be working with our partner, Turner PR, to conduct a thorough and effective public relations campaign designed to obtain coverage on Estes Park’s tourism-related experiences in 100+ targeted outlets and publications. These efforts will include traditional print, broadcast and online publications along with emerging outlets and influencers, with an emphasis on providing unique, authentic and relevant content through trusted sources. Initiatives will include hosting press/media in Estes Park, traveling to press/media to present story ideas, year-round story-pitching, writing/distributing press releases, and responding to media inquiries.

Owned Media: Website, Social Media, Blog, Email Marketing, Collateral Development & Visitor Center

Visit Estes Park will continue to optimize, refine and develop the channels we use to communicate with current, past and future guests. This includes optimizing all digital channels for performance, reach and engagement. This is done through a variety of efforts, including continuously improving search engine optimization, developing new, more relevant content, and adding new features, such as a “Related Content Module,” a newly designed

printable events calendar, and a social media aggregator widget. Similarly, we continue to monitor JackRabbit Book Direct lodging referrals (VEP in top 2 lodging referrals in the country for JackRabbit) and looking for additional ways to optimize this program to drive additional lodging bookings.

2016 VEP Strategy: Currently, we are considering dining and activity booking options and flight search to provide a more comprehensive booking option for guests and curtail the need to visit other websites.

To continue to provide services to travelers once they are in Estes Park, the Estes Park Official Visitor Guide will now be distributed through brochure racks around Estes Park, in addition to the regional distribution previously in place. The 2016 guide will have new features, such as paid content sections and interactive sticky tabs to further engage potential guests. Visit Estes Park is working with the Town of Estes Park on plans to distribute the Happenings event calendar throughout town via sign-holders at public restrooms. In the Estes Park Visitor Center, in partnership with the Town, Visit Estes Park plans to invest in interactive touch screens that will provide guests with the information currently found in the brochure racks, along with brand engagement opportunities. Visit Estes Park will continue to seek opportunities to utilize the VEP mobile visitor center that was introduced in 2015 at the Farmers Market and area events, to directly engage with guests and residents, seeking their input and ideas.

Partnership Development & Destination Brand Strategy

Estes business partners are key to the success of a successful Brand Strategy. VEP will continue to provide Brand Strategy classes and incentives; however, we need local businesses to engage in order to drive the destination forward and represent the brand that VEP is supporting.

2016 VEP Strategy: Visit Estes Park will continue to hold stakeholder education sessions and continuing Brand Strategy Culturalization to assist our local tourism partners in taking advantage of opportunities for business growth and professional development. We will continue to solicit feedback from our stakeholders, on both an annual and ongoing basis, in order to continuously improve our programs, including educational sessions, marketing products, advertising performance, potential new products and more.

Customer Relationship Management System

The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software has been in place across the organization since the new website launched in 2013. The system continues to add productivity to Visit Estes Park's daily operations, including communications, reporting, managing inventories, event calendar listings, and more.

2016 VEP Strategy: Visit Estes Park will review and refine access to the Extranet, the portal through which stakeholders can access information available in the CRM. This will provide a 'one stop shop' for stakeholders to access updates from VEP, manage their listings, review and respond to leads and marketing opportunities, review benefits provided to them by VEP, and more. By further utilizing this system, both Visit Estes Park and our stakeholders will reach new levels of understanding, information sharing and, ultimately, higher efficiency in conducting business together.

Group Sales & Services

Our advertising campaign is designed to inspire travelers of all sorts, including brides and grooms, tour and meeting professionals, and reunion planners.

2016 VEP Strategy: Visit Estes Park will continue to support the group sales and service efforts of our local partners by facilitating leads, fostering collaboration through events such as the Association Forum, and participate with local associations. We will also work to engage consumers and organizations. We will engage those consumers through dynamic, targeted content and stories that will move them through the purchase funnel.